

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
APRIL 13, 2006

Members Present: Barbara Sutherland (Co Chair), Al Byam (Co-Chair), Doris Holden (Treasurer), Elsie Fetterman, Frank Latucca, Ed Kaler, Susan Whitbourne, Tom McAuley, Rosemary Kofler (Secretary)

Absent: none

Select Board Liaison Present: Gerry Weiss

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Marlene Barnett (Program Coordinator)

Guests: Marge Babb, Elana Victor

Welcome:

The Council on Aging meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by Barbara Sutherland, Co Chair.

Minutes of March Meeting:

The minutes of the meeting on March 9, 2006 were accepted as written.

Senior Trust Treasurer's Report:

Doris reported that a check was made out to the Town for \$1200 for Wellness Grants. The total balance of Accounts is \$78,324.

Experience Works:

Nancy spoke of the tremendous free help the Center has received from people through the Experience Works program. Currently Anita Chan-Randall works about 20 hours a week at the Center helping Maura with Meals on Wheels, weekly publicity and a variety of other things. Experience Works recently sent a fund raising letter. Nancy asked members to consider a donation to that organization. Doris made a motion that we contribute \$300 to Experience Works. It was seconded and passed.

Nancy applied for a Community Grant from the Woman's Club. They sent the Senior Center a \$200 check.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

COA By-Law:

Nancy reported that the Attorney General as well as the Town Meeting approved the COA By-Law.

FY 07 Budget Update:

Nancy reported that in recent meetings with the Select Board and the Finance Committee it was recommended that Marlene's position be cut by 25%.

Gerry pointed out that originally the SB and Finance Committee recommended a 100% cut. He advocated for the Senior Center and recommended a 25% cut unless the Town Manager's office was willing to take over some of the scheduling that Karen now does. The new Town Manager will make the final decision about who handles the scheduling of space after July 1.

The good news is that there is a bill before the House to increase the Formula Grant from the state, which may bring us more money.

NEW BUSINESS

New Counseling Center:

Maura said that she, Susan, Edie Howe, and Nancy have been meeting to talk about setting up a satellite office of the UMass Psychological Services Center at the Amherst Senior Center. It would be staffed by doctoral students in psychology, supervised by Edie Howe, a licensed psychologist, and overseen by Susan Whitbourne. A letter (handout) was sent to Highland Valley Elder Services (HVES) to request funding from their Federal Title III Grant. If granted, the money would allow the program to begin in September, 2006. Additional Title III Grant money would then be requested for continuation of the program from October 1, 2006 through the end of

September, 2007. Mental health issues such as isolation and depression with elders are just not addressed so having this program at the Center would be very helpful to seniors.

Susan pointed out that normal charges at the UMass Center are on a sliding scale from \$15-\$60. The Director is willing to waive the fee at the Senior Center down to \$5. They are also considering Group Sessions, which would reduce the cost even further. Students will do their own scheduling directly with the clients so the Center will not have additional administrative burdens. The intent of the program is to provide services, to train students, and to assist Maura.

Nancy reported that the UMass Dept of Speech and Hearing is interested in coming to the Center on a regular basis to do hearing testing and running seminars.

Volunteer Recognition:

Nancy would like to plan an event to recognize the 200 volunteers who come to the Center. She asked members to think of ideas for a program or a speaker for the event. The Eveline Sears Award would be presented at the event. John Foster and Bob Ludwig, both of whom have been long time volunteers for Meals on Wheels, have been recommended to receive the Award this year. Elsie also recommended Marcia Feinstein, the fitness instructor. It was suggested that Marcia be considered for next year. Frank made a motion to give the Eveline Sears Award to John Foster and Bob Ludwig this year. It was seconded and voted favorably.

Long-Range Planning Retreat:

Members agreed that September would be the best month for a 3 hour COA Retreat. Susan has a speaker lined up who will help us focus on the trends, changes and thoughts for the future.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Transportation:

Al reports that PVTa contracts are in the process of being rebid. There is legislation to take the excess Registry fees that were put in place for the Big Dig and put them toward regional transit authority funding.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Elsie spoke about the Treehouse Project that brings together elders with adopted foster children and their families in an affordable housing complex. The goal is to provide a neighborly atmosphere and promote intergenerational relationships. There will be a series of Open Houses at Treehouse. Dr. Phil donated \$50,000 to the program and came to film Treehouse to be aired on TV.

Ad Hoc Trust/Friends Transition Committee:

The Friends Group has put together a draft document. They will meet with the attorney next week and hope to have a document to present to the COA at next month's meeting.

Parking:

Ed reports that he and Elana Victor have been gathering information about getting reduced parking fees near Bangs for seniors who attend activities. Since there is no longer a Parking Commission, Jon Tucker the Planning Director provided information on the parking regulations. The Town has a policy that it is a public responsibility to provide adequate parking for all commercial and non-commercial needs. There is a Parking Staff Meeting that is held every 2 weeks.

Ed talked about various ideas that have come up.

Police Chief Scherpa said that he favors a system that allows eligible seniors a 2-hour grace period if a sticker is affixed to their car. One idea from the committee would utilize a sticker and allow a 2-hour grace period after the senior paid for 2 hours of parking. A second idea was a 2 hour grace period after paying for ½ hour of parking.

One concern is the abuse of a sticker or placard. Use of a sticker would be restricted to the parking areas near Bangs. More ideas are needed before the committee can present anything to the Parking Staff. They will then ask the Parking Staff to come up with their own ideas as well as suggestions based on the committee's ideas. The

committee will focus first on elder parking before tackling the issue of parking for the volunteers. Once there are clear suggestions the committee can get on the Select Board agenda.

Elsie made a motion that Ed and Elana take their recommendations to the Parking Staff for an open discussion. Gerry said that there is talk about re-establishing a Parking Commission. Nancy suggested that if such a commission is established that the COA be represented. She also suggested that perhaps the Trust could supply parking quarters to those seniors in financial need when they attend activities at the Center.

STAFF REPORTS

Defibrillator Training:

Nancy reported that \$7000 was raised in the community to buy 2 automatic defibrillators – one for Town Hall, one for Bangs. They will be installed soon and all Senior Center staff will be trained to use them.

Student Volunteer Recognition:

Nancy announced that the Center will be starting a tradition of a Volunteer Event in which student volunteers will be recognized and thanked. They will discuss their experiences and hand in their reports at the event. The event will be held May 4 from 4:30 – 6:00 PM. COA members are invited to attend

Fund Raising Project:

Alpha Chi Omega approached the Center wanting to do some community service work. Marlene suggested fund raising. They had a 50/50 raffle at Chili's and raised \$196.

Volunteer Manual:

The Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) requests that Senior Centers have a Volunteer Manual. Maura has gotten copies from several neighboring Senior Centers. She will begin working on a manual for our Center to include things such as a welcoming letter from the Director, what the Center is all about, confidentiality issues, and policies and procedures.

Kindred Spirits:

Maura reported that she gets Title III funding for “Kindred Spirits” or “Grandfamilies” – grandparents (or other relatives) who raise their grandchildren. The support group meets monthly at the Northampton COA. About 6-8 people attend. Respite and finances are difficult issues for those people. It was decided to have a legislative event to address those issues. Stan Rosenberg, Ellen Story and groups from Springfield, Greenfield, Pittsfield, Chicopee and the legislators from those areas were at the well-attended event. The problems, frustrations and difficulties in dealing with DSS were topics of discussion. They came up with the idea of establishing a commission to assess the challenges and make recommendations on how the state can assist these special families. They also discussed starting a 24/7 hotline to help these families.

Needs and Offers Brochure:

Part of the Title III funding Maura receives is to be used to create a Caring Community – becoming aware of others in your community and their needs. She is distributing a brochure among our seniors asking them if they have a service to offer or are in need of a service. After compiling the responses, that information could go on the Highland Valley website to put seniors in touch with each other in fulfilling their needs regionally.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:33 AM.

The next COA meeting will be May 11, 2006, at 9 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Rosemary Kofler, Secretary